



194 Smith Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02908-4914
Telephone: (401) 751-7100 Fax: (401) 331-8533
www.RhodeIslandAFLCIO.org • info@RIAFLCIO.com

Rhode Island Works Best When We Say **UNION YES.**

March 31, 2026

Chairman Stephen M. Casey
House Municipal Government and Housing Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Testimony in Support of HB8294, An Act Relating to Property – Abandoned Property

Dear Chairman Casey and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO, which represents over 80,000 working people across the state, I write in support of House Bill 8294 introduced by Representative June Speakman.

This legislation would allow energy storage systems to be developed as a by-right use on abandoned and contaminated properties, sites that are too often left vacant, underutilized, and burdensome to surrounding communities. By directing development to these properties, HB-8294 promotes responsible land use while helping municipalities remediate blight, improve public safety, and return properties to the tax rolls.

This bill represents a significant opportunity to create good-paying union jobs in construction and ongoing system maintenance. As Rhode Island works to expand its energy storage capacity, these projects will require a skilled workforce, providing consistent employment opportunities for members of the building and construction trades. It supports smart development, rather than placing additional pressure on undeveloped land, it incentivizes investment in sites that already need remediation and infrastructure improvements. This approach aligns economic development with environmental responsibility and community revitalization.

The need for this investment is clear. Rhode Island currently lags far behind neighboring states in energy storage deployment, despite clear state goals to significantly expand capacity in the coming years. Without policy changes, we risk falling further behind in a growing industry that is critical to grid reliability, energy affordability, and long-term economic competitiveness.

Energy storage systems are not just about clean energy; they are about building a more resilient and efficient electric grid. Strategic deployment can reduce strain on existing infrastructure, help avoid costly upgrades, and ultimately lower costs for ratepayers. That means real savings for working families and more predictable energy costs for employers.

House Bill 8294 creates pathways to turn distressed properties into productive assets while positioning Rhode Island to compete in a rapidly growing energy storage sector. For these reasons, the Rhode Island AFL-CIO respectfully urges your support of House Bill 8294.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Erica A. Hammond". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Erica A. Hammond
Legislative Director, Rhode Island AFL-CIO